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ABSTRACT

After a new course in computer-aided writing was implemented at South Seattle Community College (SSCC), in Washington, a group of instructors met to evaluate the possibility of applying computer-aided instructional tools to the teaching of writing in College Transfer (CT) and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) courses at SSCC. For CT courses, the group reviewed the literature and surveyed faculty at SSCC to examine how computer classrooms were used in the teaching of writing, the extent to which they were used, advantages and disadvantages perceived by SSCC faculty in utilizing computers, and any limitations on use. They found that individuals used English lab computers more than whole classes, while advantages cited by teachers included the speed and ease of revisions, software providing drill and practice on skills, and professional look of student papers. Disadvantages cited were increased demand on students' time, student overreliance on spelling and thesaurus programs, and the inability of computers to store previous drafts of writing. The teachers also reported insufficient numbers of computers and available lab time. For ESL courses, the group explored the potential applications of computers in instruction and the technology available at SSCC and surveyed ESL programs in the Seattle area. The main uses of computers in ESL instruction were as a subject of instruction in English and as a tool for reading comprehension. Individuals were more involved than classes or whole institutions. (Contains 28 references.) (PAA)

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ED 405 011

Parts I and II

Using Emerging Technology to Improve Instruction in College Transfer English and English as a Second Language

Title III Coop Project Reports

prepared by

Judith Bentley

and

Roger Bourret

South Seattle Community College
Seattle, Washington

September 1991

TC 940 014

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Part I

Transferring Emerging Technology

from:

ICT-115 "Computer Aided Writing"

to:

College Transfer English
Writing Courses

A Title III Coop Project Report

prepared by

Judith Bentley

South Seattle Community College
Seattle, Washington

September 1991

INTRODUCTION

A new course in Computer Aided Writing (ICT-115) was offered in the Technology Division in the winter and spring quarters of 1991. It met in the DOS (IBM) computer lab and used software such as Wordperfect for word processing, Grammatik as a grammar and style-checker and CD-Rom for reference and research. The use of such emerging technology in ICT-115 raised the question whether anything learned or used in this course could be applied to the teaching of writing in College Transfer courses.

Three instructors--George Neff of Computer Technology, Roger Bourret of ESL, and Judy Bentley of Developmental English, College Transfer--met to familiarize ourselves with the tools and techniques of ICT-115 and with the research literature on the use of emerging technology in the teaching of writing. We also gathered and shared information from our respective departments as to current use of computers in teaching writing.

As the College Transfer representative in the group, I sought answers to the following questions:

1. How are computer classrooms used in the teaching of writing?

2. To what extent are computers used now in College Transfer classes to teach grammar or composition?

3. What advantages do English teachers perceive in the use of computers for the teaching of grammar and composition?

4. What disadvantages do South Seattle Community College English teachers perceive in the use of computers?

5. What are the limitations at South Seattle Community College on the use of computers in College Transfer writing classes?

6. What more would English teachers like to do with computers?

After answering these questions, the report will conclude with recommendations for further exploration and action on this topic.

1. HOW ARE COMPUTER CLASSROOMS USED IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING?

The Research Literature

An article called "Teaching College Composition with Computers" discusses the advantages and disadvantages of conducting the entire writing course in a computer classroom (See Part II, Appendix 1). The authors and assistants observed two teachers teaching introductory college composition courses for a semester. Each teacher taught both a regular section and a computer section of the course.

In the computer classroom, the observers found that the teachers used a less traditional approach, with less time devoted to lecture and discussion. Instead they used a workshop approach to writing with almost twice as much time (27%) actually spent on writing. Because of the necessity of teaching some computer skills (13 to 16% of the time) as well as writing skills, the teachers had to plan more carefully. Having a lab assistant helped greatly. Students found that some classroom time away from the computers was needed. Fewer peer activities occurred in the computer classroom.

ICT-115 at South Seattle Community College

In such a computer classroom with 24 fully maintained IBM computers, George Neff and Roger Bourret teach a course that introduces tools and techniques for business writing. Those tools and techniques include word processing, document planning, a style checker (defined as providing quantitative data about a word processing document), a grammar checker (defined as providing comments about suspected grammar errors in such documents), and CD Rom for research. (See Part III, Appendix 2, Appendix 1, "Computer-Aided Writing: An Emerging Field" for a more complete description of the course.)

Of particular interest to College Transfer teachers are some of the following components of the course:

1. The use of Wordperfect for word processing and the assumption of some keyboarding ability by students. This ability varies widely, and the variations are accommodated in the course.

2. The use of Grammatik for providing quantitative analysis of the writing skills of the class as well as of individual students. This analysis includes average number of words used per sentence, average number of syllables per word, grade level of the writing, and number of sentences per paragraph. The quantitative results are used both to develop a class profile on which to base instructional content and to set individual goals for students. For example, a student may be

encouraged to increase his or her average number of syllables per word through the use of a computer thesaurus, as a technique for developing a more sophisticated writing vocabulary. Students may be encouraged to write longer or shorter sentences or to include more sentences in a paragraph.

3. The use of Grammatik by individual students in an interactive mode to edit their compositions.

4. The introduction to and use of CD Rom as a reference and research tool.

The components of this course that seem most attractive to College Transfer writing teachers are the availability of 24 computers in a classroom five days a week, the potential of quantitative analysis to provide useful feedback to the teacher and student, the motivating advantage of computers for some students, and the potential for a software program to relieve the English teacher of line by line identification of mechanical errors. For content-based nonfiction writing, the potential use of CD-Rom reference tools and databases is also attractive.

Using a Grammar Checker

In particular, I investigated the usefulness of the grammar checker used in ICT-115, Grammatik 4, and the grammar checker available in the English computer lab, Sensible Grammar. I selected five student writing samples from English 096. All the samples were first drafts of a paper or writing done in class. The samples included a good writer from a native-speaking background, a good writer from an ESL background, an average writer from a native-speaking background, an average writer from an ESL background, and a poor writer from an ESL-background. These samples roughly reflect the writing skills of typical students in this essay-writing class. The samples were "read" and commented on by the two grammar checkers. (See Appendix 1 for samples and comments.)

Neither program consistently recognized some of the most common errors made by students at this level: fragments, runons, lack of punctuation in compound sentences, subject-verb agreement, incorrectly formed verb tenses, and inconsistency in verb tenses, lack of pronoun agreement, and use of the wrong form of a word (emphasis for emphasize). Each program made some incorrect identifications ("I was overwhelmed" was identified as passive voice; "for" was perceived as a preposition rather than a coordinate conjunction, and the student was advised to use an objective rather than subjective pronoun after it.) One or the other program correctly identified wordiness, the use of contractions, the use of too much punctuation (?,"), the use of "must of" instead of "must have," and the absence of a comma after an introductory dependent clause.

Of the five samples submitted to these programs, only the average native speaker and the average ESL student would benefit from using this program. Even then, the student must make judgments about the advice given. For Writer #2, the average native speaker, Grammatik correctly identified five problems and one style improvement. It missed seven errors and gave incorrect advice on three errors. For Writer #3, the average ESL-background student, Grammatik correctly identified six errors and missed ten others but made no incorrect identifications. The program seemed to give up on Writer #5, the weak ESL-background writer, correctly identifying one error in the first sentence and missing ten mistakes in the rest of the sentences, mainly verb tense errors and fragments. In general Sensible Grammar is better at identifying punctuation errors. One element Grammatik identifies that Sensible Grammar does not is length of sentences. It suggests that long sentences may be runons.

Neither of these programs relieves the teacher or the student of identifying surface level errors. If used, the programs would require extensive interaction with the teacher or a highly capable, independent student who knows when to accept the changes suggested and when to reject them as inappropriate or wrong. Such a student could not rely on these programs to catch all mistakes.

Research articles on grammar checkers (see "Revising with the Help of a Grammar Checker," "An Analysis of Incremental Improvement Using a Syntax Checker for Business Students," and "A New Grammar Checker" in Part II, Appendix 1) caution that they should be used as merely a first step in the editing process. They cannot substitute for content revision. Their use may place an undue emphasis on surface level revisions at the expense of structural revisions. We should continue to look at new grammar-checking software as it is released in the hope of finding a program that approaches the teacher's ability in suggesting revisions.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT ARE COMPUTERS USED NOW IN COLLEGE TRANSFER COURSES FOR THE TEACHING OF WRITING?

To answer this question I surveyed the following teachers: Bonnie Casey, Stanley Chu, Shalin Hai-Jew, Tom Lorentzen, Amy McKendry, Mark Palek, Katherine Pellman, Kristin Tregillus, and Tim Walsh. The following grammar or composition courses have been taught by these teachers: ESL 093 and 095, English 080K, 080L, 092, 094, 096, 098, 101A, 101B, 101, 102, 108, and 201. (See Appendix 2 for Questions).

The computers available for use by College Transfer students and teachers are 12 Apple computers. These computers are located in a room within the English lab. The computers are

available to any student from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m., from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and sometimes in the evenings, when classes are not using the English lab. Apple computers in the math lab are also available for word processing in the afternoon from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The computers are available for class use from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. weekdays and must be scheduled with the lab technician.

Use of the Computer Lab

Records show heavy use of these computers by individuals. Several teachers of college level courses such as English 101, 102, 108, and 201 advise their students of the availability of the computer lab. Some individuals from these courses then use the labs for the word processing of their papers and occasional use of instructional software or style-checkers such as Writer's Helper. They may also be referred for work on specific grammar or punctuation skills.

The computers are used less often by complete classes. In the Spring Quarter of 1991, an ESL 095 class met everyday in the lab since there was no 10:00 regular English Lab class scheduled that quarter, but the class did not make use of the computers until the last week. Mark Palek's English 096 class met most often in the lab, three days of most weeks, from 9 to 10 a.m. With 30 students in the class, each student had an average of one day on the computer. An English 094 class met for one week in the lab. These classes used the computers for grammar and skills practice supplemental to their textbooks, for orientation to computers for word processing, for word processing of paragraphs, and for checking spelling and using the computer thesaurus.

Software Used Most Frequently

The software used most frequently in the English computer lab is Bank Street Writer for word-processing and use of Spellcheck and a thesaurus; Writer's Helper for style analysis; and Skillsbank for grammar exercises.

3. WHAT ADVANTAGES DO SOUTH SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS PERCEIVE IN THE USE OF COMPUTERS FOR THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION?

College Transfer English teachers questioned in the survey perceived the following advantages:

The speed and ease of revisions on a computer encourage students to make more changes, in order of paragraphs, word choice, spelling, etc., resulting in fewer surface level errors and more content revision. (See "Integrating Word Processing Skills with Revision Skills," Part II, Appendix 1, for a consideration of this assumption.)

Style-checkers provide feedback on sentence length, repetitive word use, level of writing complexity and essay length which students may use in revising.

Software programs can provide more drill and practice on skills, using different sentences than a text or teacher and providing immediate feedback.

The novelty of computers and the change of modes or classrooms can be a motivating factor and provide an energy boost.

Grammar checkers can do the identification of surface-level errors that a teacher often does.

Computers allow students to use their time more efficiently.

Students are introduced to computer and word-processing techniques.

Networked computers allow easier access for other students or teacher to help in the revising and editing process.

Computers allow for the more efficient teaching of mechanics (spelling, punctuation, verbs, pronoun agreement, etc.)

Teachers can demonstrate the effect of different organizational patterns, easily moving paragraphs around on an overhead screen controlled by computer.

Students' papers look more professional and are easier to read.

Computer printers provide ease in duplication,

Reference programs such as Spellcheck have been a help to some students.

Students could use graphics on their papers.

4. WHAT DISADVANTAGES DO SOUTH SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS PERCEIVE IN THE USE OF COMPUTERS?

Responding to a survey question, teachers perceived the following disadvantages to the use of computers:

Some students do not have enough time on campus to use the computers outside of scheduled class time because they must work, take care of children, etc. Also the computers are not

available at all times. Requiring that compositions must be done on a computer thus makes an extra demand on the student unless sufficient class time is provided in the computer lab.

When class computer time is provided, students tend to spend less time outside of class working on their writing assignments.

Computers encourage an overreliance on spelling and thesaurus programs; students don't develop their own memorization skills, spelling ability, word and vocabulary knowledge. Spellchek and grammarchek may create a dependence by students on someone else to fix their work and could be a disincentive to learning.

Computers can be intimidating; time is required of both teacher and student to become comfortable with them. When students experience glitches or lose data, they become frustrated.

When computers are used exclusively, the relationship between student and teacher is altered. The teacher may play a "monitor" role, eye contact is reduced, there may be less give and take, less interaction between teacher and student, and subsequently slower development of a personal relationship.

The emphasis in a computer classroom can shift from writing skills to computer skills.

The noise of the computers and the tension of working at a machine are not conducive to writing; paper, pen and quiet are.

The computer does not store all drafts, so the student can't go back to see earlier versions.

5. WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS ON THE USE OF COMPUTERS IN COLLEGE TRANSFER WRITING CLASSES?

Teachers most often mentioned two related limitations on their use of computers for teaching writing: the insufficient number of computers in the English Lab (12 computers for classes up to 36 in size) and insufficient availability of the computers (8-9 a.m. and 10 a.m. -1 p.m. for individuals, 9-10 a.m. for classes). "With two or three students at one computer, I'm afraid it's a waste of time," one teacher commented. Students who want to use the computers outside of the 9 to 10 a.m. class hour must interrupt a lab class in order to walk through to the computer room. Other limitations related to space, equipment, time, resources, and computer skills:

In terms of space, the computer room is very crowded; fitting 24 chairs in to put two students at each of twelve computers is nearly impossible. The room also lacks enough

space for teachers to do demonstrations. Equipment problems include noisy printers, a missing piece from the data show, and eyestrain from the screens. In addition, since the computers are not networked, classes are unable to do group activities. Computer use is also limited by students' weak keyboarding skills, some students computer phobia, and some teachers' discomfort with or lack of familiarity with computers. A more extensive list of programs that match skills taught in texts used in the basic courses is needed. Instructors have limited time to plan a course using computers, especially part-time instructors who teach at two or more colleges. Many teachers also lack easy access to computers at home or at school to prepare computer-related lessons.

6. WHAT MORE WOULD TEACHERS LIKE TO BE ABLE TO DO WITH COMPUTERS?

Many teachers would like to spend more class time on computers. They vary in the amount of time they would like. Some would like a computer classroom to use five days a week, with a computer for each student and an attached room for small group work. Others would like a friendly computer-equipped writing center that is available to individual students outside of class time, with assistants literate in both computers and writing, and quiet printers. Other teachers would like a computer classroom to use occasionally.

Accordingly, teachers vary in ways in which they would have students using computers. Some would have students write the final draft of at least one paper on the computer. Some would like to have students use computers for generating thoughts and composing. Others would use such facilities to do more of the work of the teacher as editor: identifying surface level errors, making suggestions for revision of content, advising on style.

In the area of mechanical errors, teachers would also use computers instead of or in addition to textbooks for self-correcting grammar exercises, exercises that correlate with the most widely used texts in the different course. Networked computers would provide a class error analysis. The teacher would also be able to call up a student's work at a front desk computer and interact with the student on the grammar drill.

Other capabilities teachers would like are to have students enter text on computers that are networked so other students would have access to it for comment, revising, editing suggestions. The teacher could then call up one student's work on all the computers and do a class analysis. They would like to use the data show cart in the classroom so that lessons can be projected and changes made on a large screen.

Plans for Computer Facilities

In applying for a four-year Title III grant for the years 1992-1996, the college described the need for a Computer Center. The center would function both as a computer classroom and as an open lab. (See Appendix 3 for a description of this proposal.) This center would not be funded and operational until the years 1993-95. In the meantime, the DOS (IBM) computer classrooms could be available to College Transfer classes in the Winter Quarter of 1992 or for open lab-type uses in the Fall of 1992.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the perceived advantages of using computers to aid writing (Question #3) and given what College Transfer English teachers say they would like to be able to do with computers (Question #6) and given the perceived disadvantages (Question #4) and the current limitations on the use of computers (Question #5), I would like to suggest the following. Most teachers would like to have some computer technology more available for their use in teaching writing. A committee should be formed of interested English instructors, the computer lab technicians, George Neff, computer instructor, and Mike McCrath, College Transfer Division Dean, to consider the following recommendations.

1. Support the development of a Computer Center as described in the Title III grant application.

2. In the meantime, meet the need for more computer classrooms to teach writing by utilizing the present DOS computer rooms.

3. Pilot a computer-equipped Writing Center in one of the Dos classrooms which could be used by students on a drop-in basis for assistance in writing assignments for any class on campus. The center would be staffed by a computer lab technician, writing teacher, and ESL teacher.

4. Design a computer-aided College Transfer writing course. Conduct one section of English 096 or of English 101 as a computer section using the DOS computer classroom in the Winter Quarter of 1992.

5. Maintain the current English computer lab as an open lab available for classes and individual work primarily on mechanical skills. Consider enlarging the size or changing the location of the computer room so that it could be used by entire classes at once.

6. Facilitate the use of software programs that supplement texts used in the writing classes through faculty education and

development, using the resource of the computer lab coordinator, Amy McKendry.

7. Monitor new grammar checker software programs, perhaps using ICT-115 as a test-bed for trying out new technology.

8. Send an English teacher to "The Difference Technology Makes" conference sponsored by the League for Innovation in Community Colleges, Nov. 3-6 in San Diego.

APPENDICES

1. Student writing samples with interactive comments from Grammatik and marks from Sensible Grammar

2. Survey questions for College Transfer English teachers

3. Description of Title III proposal for a Computer Center

FIVE WRITING SAMPLES FROM ENGLISH 096

(These are either rough drafts or in-class essays.)

WRITER #1, A Good native speaker

When I first walked into this class I was overwhelmed at the amount of material the syllabus outlined for me to learn this quarter. As the class continued on the realization set in that I was learning and yet the effort did not seem difficult. "Why was this?," I thought. The style of the teaching and the teacher herself. Maybe that needs more explanation.

Let's start with the class discussions. A very non-participating class, except the day we were brainstorming for an essay on Soap operas. Everyone seemed like they needed individual permission to speak for most had good answers when asked. She took this very casually although I have seen teachers get very upset over no participation, all the while she would continue encouraging and smiling sensitively at everyone asking for participation. Everyone got different variations of feedback as well as her input during group evaluations for she made sure to allow enough time for this.

She also emphasized the class discussion on needs. No replay of last quarter's 096 I'm sure for when we all seem to be having trouble with verbs she had class one day just for verbs. This class was voluntary, yet all of us came. Handouts stapled together (must of been a selection of at least 10) were given to those who wanted them. Mistakes and misunderstanding is O.K. in her class for the emphasis the answer not the person.

WRITER #2 An average native speaker

I have had a lot of experience before, but observing a herd od ducks was fascinating. The first thing that I noticed was that they have many shapes and colors. They also behave themselves as a human would. They seemed to like the environment. Deep down, I think they have a individual character.

One duck has varies colors and he is cleaning himself. This particular duck seems to be ready for bed because all of the ducks are now coming out of the water accept about ten. He is know using it's peak to peck at his short legs. He frecuently quacks and look around as if he is calling another duck.

There are know some people out feeding the ducks. All of the ducks in the water are now swimming for the shore. I notice that they all came to shore in a single file line in pairs of two's and three's. They are very comfortable with the people and the people are very excited and is enjoying themselves.

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WRITER #3, A good ESL-background writer

This fall quarter has surely pass by quickly. Being in English 096 has been both fun and challenging. I have learned much during this time. I learned the ways of writing a good essays, verb tense, compound & complex sentences, and how to revise my essays. On the other hand I still haven't learned to look for my mistakes, maybe I need more practices. Overall, I think that everything went just O.K.. like the way I expected.

During the eleven weeks, I have learned to write different kinds of essays such as personal, interview, observation, persuasive essays. I also learned that an essay has a topic, body and conclusion. And the most important of all I learned to revise essays by looking for verb tenses, sentences structures and so on. Although, I think I'm still not good on revising. If there were more time, I would like to learn verb tense, do some more practices on revising.

WRITER #4, An average ESL-background writer

Narrative essay is hard for me to do, because I do not like to write personal feeling toward the essay. My writing during the entire quarter went very well, each time I write an essay I can improve my vocal, write it in detail, and had less grammar problem, I hope! I has learned, like in an essay the important is that I write down what my though about the topic there is no need of introduction or thesis, which giving the writer have a feeling that they had started something so they have to finish it.

WRITER #5, A weak ESL-background writer

When there is inflation, it cause most of the American families spending more money. If the school can reducing the cost of the tuition. Then the inflation can be decreasing. Because of the economic system, such as products and the differences in our resources cost and academic cost. It can be a major effect in economic system, and it will causing inflation. To ensure our young people in their country pursue an education, so that the rates of the college students will increasing. Perhaps, their are many good jobs will be avilable for those students who gratuating from college. From this result, the tuition should be decreasing for students to have a better chance to have a better career.

All of these samples have been checked with a spelling checker.

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Grammatik – interlinear comments

FIVE WRITING SAMPLES FROM ENGLISH 096

(These are either rough drafts or in-class essays.)

WRITER #1, A good native speaker

When I first walked into this class I [#Passive voice: `was overwhelmed`. Consider revising using active voice. See Help for more information.#]was overwhelmed at the amount of material the syllabus outlined for me to learn this quarter. As the class continued on, the realization set in that I was learning, and yet the effort did not seem difficult. "Why was this[#End of sentence needs a space after it.#]?" I thought. [#No verb found - this may be an incomplete sentence.#]The style of the teaching and the teacher herself. [#No verb found - this may be an incomplete sentence.#]Maybe that needs more explanation.

Let's start with the class discussions. A very non-participating class, except the day we were brainstorming for an essay on Soap operas. Everyone seemed like they needed individual permission to speak for most had good answers when asked. [#Long sentences can be difficult to read and understand. Consider revising so that no more than one complete thought is expressed in each sentence.#]She took this very casually although I have seen teachers get very upset over no participation, all the while she would continue encouraging and smiling sensitively at everyone asking for participation. Everyone got different variations of feedback [#Simplify.#]as well as her input during group evaluations for [#The context of `she` indicates that you may need to replace it with the object pronoun `her`.#]she made sure to allow enough time for this.

She also emphasized the class discussion on needs. No replay of last quarter's 096 I'm sure for when we all [#Simplify.#]seem to be having trouble with verbs she had class one day just for verbs. This class was voluntary, yet allot came. Handouts stapled together ([#Consider revising.#]must of been a selection of at least 10) [#Passive voice: `were given`. Consider revising using active voice. See Help for more information.#]were given to those who wanted them. Mistakes and misunderstanding is o.k. [#Use capital letter for first word of sentence.#][#No verb found - this may be an incomplete sentence.#]in her class for [#The context of `she` indicates that you may need to replace it with the object pronoun `her`.#]she emphasis the answer not the person.

WRITER #2, An average native speaker

I have had [#Simplify.#]a lot of expieriences before, but observing a herd of ducks was fascinating. The first thing that I noticed was that they have many shapes and colors. They also behave themselves as a human would. They seemed to like the environment. Deep down, I think they have [#Use `an` for words beginning with a vowel sound.#]a individual character.

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One duck [#If `has` is being used as an auxiliary verb, it should be used with a Past Participle verb (e.g., `has fixed`).#][#The verbs `has` and `varies` may be used incorrectly together. There may be a word or punctuation missing, or you may need a different form of the verb `varies`.#]has varies colors and he is cleaning himself. This paticular duck [#Simplify.#]seems to be ready for bed because [#Simplify. Use `all` unless followed by a pronoun.#]all of the ducks are now coming out of the water [#`Accept` means to receive: "Please accept my offer." `Except` means to leave out: "Except the last provision of the contract."#]accept about ten. He [#If `is` is being used as an auxiliary verb, it should be used with a Past Participle or Present Participle verb (e.g., `is fixed` or `is fixing`).#]is know using it's beck to peck at his short legs. He frequently quacks and look around as if he is calling another duck.

There [#If `are` is being used as an auxiliary verb, it should be used with a Past Participle or Present Participle verb (e.g., `are fixed` or `are fixing`).#]are know some people out feeding the ducks. [#Simplify. Use `all` unless followed by a pronoun.#]All of the ducks in the water are now swiming for the shore. I notice that they all come to shore in a single file line in pairs of twos and three's. They are very comfortable with the people and the people [#Passive voice: `are excited`. Consider revising using active voice. See Help for more information.#]are very excited and is enjoying themselves.

WRITER #3, A good [#Mixed capital and lower case letters.#]ESL-background writer

This fall quarter has surely pass by quickly. Being in English 096 has been both fun and challenging. I have learned much during this time. I learned the ways of writing [#Usually `a` is used with a singular noun or noun phrase.#]a good essays, verb tense, compound & complex sentenses, and how to revise my essays. On the otherhand I still haven't learned to look for my mistakes, maybe I need more practices. [#Delete or simplify.#]Overall, I think that everything went just O.K[#End of sentence needs a space after it.#].. [#Use capital letter for first word of sentence.#]like the way I expected.

During the eleven weeks, I have learned to write different kinds of essays such as personal, interview, observation, persuasive essays. I also learned that an essay has a topic, body and conclusion. [#Use `And` sparingly to start a sentence.#]And the most important [#Often you can drop `of all`.#]of all I learned to revise essays by looking for verb tenses, sentenses structures and so on. Although, I think I'm still not good on revising. If [#Be sure a plural subject follows `there were`.#]there were more [#The singular noun `time` may be used incorrectly with the plural form of the verb `do`.#]time, I would like to learn verb tense, do some more practices on revising.

WRITER #4, An average [#Mixed capital and lower case letters.#]ESL-background writer

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Narrative essay is hard for me to do because I do not like to write personal feeling toward the essay. [#Long sentences can be difficult to read and understand. Consider revising so that no more than one complete thought is expressed in each sentence.#]My writing during the entire quarter went very well, each time I write an essay I can improve my vocal, write it in detail, and [#The noun 'I' usually should not be used with the third person singular form of the verb 'has'.#]I has less grama problem, I hope! [#Long sentences can be difficult to read and understand. Consider revising so that no more than one complete thought is expressed in each sentence.#]The class is very intresting, new thing [#The noun 'I' usually should not be used with the third person singular form of the verb 'has'.#]I has learned, like in an essay the [#An adjective ('important') is usually not followed by a verb ('is'). You may need to use an adverb, or a comma may be missing.#]important is that I write down what my though about the topic there is no need of introduction or thesis. [#Use capital letter for first word of sentence.#]which giving the writer have a feeling that they hade started something so they have to finish it.

WRITER #5, A weak [#Mixed capital and lower case letters.#]ESL-background writer

When there is [#Use 'an' for words beginning with a vowel sound.#]a inflation, [#The singular noun 'it' may be used incorrectly with the plural form of the verb 'cause'.#]it cause most of the American families spending more money. If the school can reducing the cost of the tuition. Then the inflation can be decreasing. Because of the economic system, such as products and the differences in our resources cost and academic cost. It can be a major effect in economic system, and it will causing inflation. To ensure our young people in their country pursue an education, so that the rates of the college students will increasing. Perhpas, their are many good jobs will be avaible for those students who graduating from college. From this result, the tuition should be decreasing for students to have a better chance to have a better career.

Types of errors missed

Commas in compound sentences

many verb tense errors

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SENSIBLE GRAMMAR

Grammar Matches: 1
Word Phases:
the amount of : omit:

When I first walked into this class I was overwhelmed at (the amount of) material the syllabus outlined for me to learn this quater.

Grammar Matches: 2
Informal Phrases:
in that: because <OR> since

As the class continued on the realization set (in that) I was learning and yet the effort did not seem difficult.

Punctuation Errors: 1
Error: Missing comma following this clause.

As the class continued on the realization set in that I was learning and yet the effort did not seem difficult.

Punctuation Errors: 2
Error: Too much punctuation.

"Why was this?!," I thought.

Grammar Matches: 2
Contractions: Remove
Let's: let us

(Let's) start with the class discussions.

Punctuation Errors: 2
Error:Missing a comma.

She took this very casually although I have seen teachers get very upset over no participation all the while she would continue encouraing and smiling sensitively at everyone asking for participation.

Grammar Matchers: 4
Wordy Phrases:
as well as: and <OR> also <OR> including

Everyone got different variation of feedback (as well as) her input during group evaluations for she made sure to allow enough time for this.

Grammar Matches: 5
Informal Phrases:
made sure: assured <OR> verified <OR> established

Everyone got different variations of feedback as well we her input during group evaluations foe she (made sure) to allow enough time for this.

Punctuation Errors: 4
Error: Missing a comma.

Everyone got different variations of feedback as well as her input during group evaluations for she made sure to allow enough time for this.

Grammar Matches: 6
Contractions: Remove
I'm: I am

No replay of last quarter's 096 (I'm) sure for when all seem to be having trouble with verbs she had class one day just for verbs.

Grammar Matches: 7
Faulty Phrases
must of: must have

Handouts stapled together <(must of) been a selection of a least 10> were given to those who wanted them.

Punctuation Error: 5
Error: Abbreviation expected.
Mistakes and misunderstanding is o.k. in her class for she emphasis the answer not person.

Grammar Matches: 8
Wordy Phrases
a lot of: many <OR> much

I have had (a lot of) experiences before, but observing a herd of ducks was fascinating.

Grammar Matches: 9
Wordy Phrases
This particular: this

(This particular) duck seems to be ready for bed because all of the ducks are now coming out of the water accept about ten.

Wordy Phrases
all of: all

This particular duck seems to be ready for bed because (all of) the ducks are now coming out of the water accept about ten.

Grammar Matches: 11
Contractions: Remove
it's: it is <OR> it has

He is know using (it's) beak at his short legs.

Grammar Matches: 12
Informal Phrases
as it: as it would if <OR> as though

He frequently quacks and looks around (as if) he is calling another duck.

Grammar Matches: 13
Informal Phrases:
All of: all

(All of) the ducks in the water are now swimming for the shore.

Punctuation Errors: 6
Error: Mixed upper and lower case letters.

WRITER #3. A good ESL-background writer

Grammar Matches: 14
Vague Phrases
On the other hand: but

(On the other hand) I still haven't learned to look for my mistakes, maybe
I need more practices.

Grammar Matches: 15
Contractions: Remove
haven't: have not

On the other hand I still (haven't learned to look for my mistakes, maybe I need more practices/

Punctuation Errors: 7
Error:Missing a comma.

On the other hand I sill haven't learned to look for my mistakes, maybe I need more practices.

Informal Phrases
Overall: general <OR> complete

[Overall], I think that everything went just O.K.. like the way I expected.

PUNCTUATION ERRORS: 8
Error: Abbreviation expected.

Overall, I think that everything went just O.K.. like the way I expected.

GRAMMAR MATCHES: 17
Redundant Phrases
different kinds: kinds

During the eleven weeks. I have learned to write [different kinds] of essays such as personal, interview, observation, persuasive essays.

PUNCTUATION ERRORS: 9
Error: Missing a comma.

During the eleven weeks. I have learned to write different kinds of essays such as personal. interview. observation. persuasive essays.

GRAMMAR MATCHES: 18
Redundant Phrases
most important: essential <OR> necessary

And the [most important] of all I learned to revise essays by looking for verb tenses. sentences structures and so on.

GRAMMAR MATCHES: 19
Contractions: Remove
I'm: I am

Although. I think [I'm] still not good on revising.

PUNCTUATION ERRORS: 10
Error: Mixed upper and lower case letters.

WRITER #4. An average ESL-background writer

GRAMMAR MATCHES: 20
Wordy Phrases
not like: unlike

Narrative essay is hard for me to do. because I do [not like] to write personal feeling toward the essay.

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Vague Phrases
toward: to

Narrative essay is hard forme to do because I do not like to write personal feeling (toward) the essay.

Punctuation Errors: 11
Error: This word is missing capital letter.

which giving the writer have a feeling that they had started something so they have to finish it.

Punctuation Errors: 12
Error: Missing a comma.
which giving the writer have a feeling that they had started something so they have to finish it.

Punctuation Errors: 14
Error: Missing comma following this clause.

If the school can reducing the cost of the tuition.

Grammar Matches: 22
Pompous Phrases
pursue: do <OR> complete <OR> finish <OR> follow
TO ensure our young people in their country (pursue) an education, so that the rates of the college students will increasing.

Grammar Matches: 23
Pompous Phrases
pursue: maybe <OR> <OMIT>

(Perhaps), their are many good jobs will be available for those students who graduating from college.

Grammar Matches: 24
Wordy Phrases
All of: all
(All of) these samples have been checked with a spelling checker.

Punctuation Errors: 15
Error: Too much punctuation.

All of these samples have been checked with a spelling checker.

August 15, 1991

To: Teachers of English 092, 094, 096, ESL 093, 095, English 101, 102, 101A, and 101B, including Bonnie Casey, Stanley Chu, Doug Clark, Shalin Hai-Jew, Tom Lorentzen, Amy McKendry, Mark Palek, Katherine Pellman, Suzanne Quillian, Kirstin Tregillus, Tim Walsh

From: Judy Bentley

As part of a grant to assess the use of emerging technology in writing classes, which George Neff, Roger Bourret and I are working on this summer, I am surveying teachers of writing at SSCC on your use of computers. I will be contacting you for answers to the following questions. (You may answer in writing, if you prefer.)

1. What writing classes do you teach regularly?
   What writing classes have you taught at SSCC?
   Have you taught writing classes at other community colleges?
   If so, what classes did you teach?

2. To what extent do you use computers in your writing classes?

   Do students use computers for:
   - planning and prewriting?
   - composing?
   - word processing?
   - revising?
   - editing?
   - learning grammar?
   - other?

   What hardware and software have you used?

3. What advantages do you see to the use of computers in writing classes?

4. What disadvantages do you see to the use of computers in writing classes?

5. Is there anything you would like to be able to do with computers in writing classes that you cannot do now?

6. What are the limitations on your use of computers? (What inhibits using them more?)

August 15, 1991

To: Teachers of English 092, 094, 096, ESL 093, 095, English 101, 102, 101A, and 101B, including Bonnie Casey, Stanley Chu, Doug Clark, Shalin Hai-Jew, Tom Lorentzen, Amy McKendry, Mark Palek, Katherine Pellman, Suzanne Quillian, Kirstin Tregillus, Tim Walsh

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   - planning and prewriting?
   - composing?
   - word processing?
   - revising?
   - editing?
   - learning grammar?
   - other?

   What hardware and software have you used?

3. What advantages do you see to the use of computers in writing classes?

4. What disadvantages do you see to the use of computers in writing classes?

5. Is there anything you would like to be able to do with computers in writing classes that you cannot do now?

6. What are the limitations on your use of computers? (What inhibits using them more?)

Part II

Using Emerging Technology to Improve Instruction in English as a Second Language

A Title III Coop Project Report

prepared by

Roger Bourret

South Seattle Community College
Seattle, Washington

September 1991

Introduction

Computer technology is being used more and more in education today. Most technology is being integrated into curriculum that is already in place; in other cases, curriculum is being developed around technology. There are many varying opinions on the effectiveness of this technology-oriented instruction as well as on the effects of technology on teaching and learning.

The goal of this part of our project is to investigate where technology fits in the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL), especially in teaching writing. In addition, an account of what technology is currently available on the South Seattle campus and how that technology might be used in teaching and learning English.

It is hoped that the integration of technological tools will become a part of the planning for the future of the ESL program. In order to enhance the integration of technology, there need to be efforts to create an environment that takes technology into account in planning, encourages teachers to get involved in planning and using technology, provides a budget for enhancing instruction through technology, and encourages the exchange of information about the integration of technology into curriculum with other departments of the school as well as other ESL professionals.

This paper discusses the use of computers and associated technology to improve instruction in English as a Second Language at South Seattle Community College.

Part I discusses literature on the potential roles of technology in teaching the skills needed to learn English as a Second Language. It explores the most likely applications of computer-based technology to reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Part II discusses the technology available for teaching ESL at South Seattle Community College as well as current uses of that technology.

Part III cites opportunities in specific courses for using technology both as tools and as content to improve instruction in ESL. It also contains recommendations for the integration of emerging technology in the ESL curriculum.

PART I

Computer Technology and ESL

The subject of this section is the use of computers by teachers of English as Second Language (ESL). We will first look at some principles and theories of second language acquisition in order to have a perspective on what ESL teachers do and on how they might expect computers to help them. In the second section, we will look at the match between computers and language learning in order to see some of the advantages and disadvantages of computer use. Finally, from a review of some of the literature on the subject and a telephone survey of some of the ESL programs in the Seattle area, we will see how computers are being put to use.

Theory and Practice of ESL

Some subjects lend themselves to use by computers. Areas of science and mathematics are structured and logic-based, and it is for these types of knowledge that computers are especially well-suited. Language is not one of these subjects. While there are certain areas of language which are structured and follow rules and procedures, there are too many exceptions and too many variables to program languages accurately. In dealing with both meaning and grammatical structure, meaning is not necessarily tied to structure. For example, the words "visiting relatives can

be boring" can mean either that the relatives who are visiting are boring or that going to visit relatives can be boring.

The linguist Noam Chomsky stressed that language was more than a set of structures and definitions; he brought out the inner or deeper meaning language structure (Chomsky, 1966). These ideas radically changed the theories and methods of language teaching from translations, memorization, and pattern practice. "There can be nothing more stultifying than language drill, whether it is memorization of paradigms or the mindless repetition of patterns divorced from any meaningful context" (Chomsky, 1969).

New theories of language learning and language acquisition, linked to Chomsky's ideas, started to affect how teachers taught. Stephen Krashen's "Monitor Theory" or "Input Theory" stressed comprehensible input and a non-threatening atmosphere (Krashen, 1983). The "Information-Processing Theory" of language acquisition by McLaughlin (1983) emphasized both the implicit and explicit retrieval of information for language use. The "Interaction Theory" (Long, 1983) shifted the emphasis from processing information to producing language.

All these theories stressed communication. The basic methods for acquiring language included meaningful practice, listening before speaking, using grammar implicitly as well as explicitly, modeling instead of correction, and a low-

anxiety atmosphere (Underwood, 1984). The intent was to improve the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Possibilities for Computers in ESL

Besides the affective factor of novelty, what can computer technology offer to language learning?

Higgins (1988) has written about the roles of "magister" and "pedagogue" that the computer can play with a student. The magister controls instruction by presenting and illustrating instruction while the pedagogue responds to and helps the learner. This distinction is often referred to as "tutorial/non-tutorial" and helps classify computer assisted instruction.

Wyatt (1987) has established three categories of computer assisted language learning (CALL): instructional, collaborative, and facilitative. The instructional approach includes tutorials, drill and practice, and games. The collaborative applications include modeling, simulations, discovery, and games in which the student initiates more than in the instructional approach. The student uses the computer as a tool in the facilitative approach which includes word processing, spell-checking, text-analysis, and on-line thesaurus.

Weible (1987) points out three unique qualities of computers as compared to other media. First, computers can be used to structure very precisely interaction between

student and subject matter. That is, computers can be used to practice a learning strategy as well as subject matter. Second, he notes that computers are process-oriented. For this reason they can be used to simulate language usage; this requires sophisticated programming, but there is great potential in this area especially with artificial intelligence techniques. Weible's third point is that computers can be used for automated individualized instruction; the computer can assess a student's level and needs and present new instruction. Weible says that while this aspect of computer use has been appreciated for a long time, most language programs still make all the students go through all the same material all in the same way.

Ahmad (1985) notes that computers can handle a wider variety of activities than other media, that computers can handle other media, and that they can be two-way interactive. He points out that software needs to be more adaptable so that teachers can augment or specialize applications. He cites the "open-ended dialogue" as a goal for CALL.

Combining computers with laser-disk technology provides realistic audio and visual input. Using artificial intelligence techniques with computers may produce true natural language capabilities.

At times, it seems that improving hardware and software will make it possible to replicate the work of, or take the place of, real teachers. How, then, with all these

possibilities are computers actually being used in the teaching of language?

Current Trends and Practices in CALL

Teachers of English as Second Language are looking for ways to make their instruction more meaningful, communicative, and interactive. As we have seen, the computer holds great potential in addressing these needs. However, most of the answers and capabilities are still in the experimental or developmental stages. The possibilities for actual solutions require expensive equipment as well as long and expensive development time. The great majority of ESL programs do not have interactive video-disk, software with artificial intelligence for natural language, or even audio cards.

As computers were introduced into education, the expectations of language teachers turned to disappointment as they saw the realities of what that early software could do and of how difficult it was to program meaningful language use into machines.

Despite these limitations, CALL grows at a rapid rate. How has the use of computers in ESL evolved? It has generally followed the patterns of computer adoption found through the National Surveys of Instructional Uses of School Computers of 1983 and 1985 (Becker, 1987) and the studies of the Educational Technology Center at Harvard (Wiske, 1988). Individual teachers start by using computers at home to

produce materials or keep records. The computer then becomes a subject of study in the classroom (computer literacy) and begins to be used as a tool in the classroom. In ESL, word processing was the first lasting in-school use of computers. Word processing programs were flexible and appropriate for any level of English (unlike other commercial language-learning software). It motivated students to write because it was new, exciting, and easy. It made revision and correction less tedious. The computer literacy course that often accompanied it served two purposes. It prepared students for use of the computer and it was also a content-based course in which students used English to learn about something other than just the language. This combination of courses seems to be the main introduction of computers into ESL programs. In a survey of Seattle ESL programs, I found that these are still the main uses of computers.

Another area in which computers are used extensively is reading comprehension. Early reading software for lower level English tended to be for younger students and the subject matter was not appropriate for adult ESL students. There are now many reading programs to choose from and ESL teachers have been active in evaluating them according to the needs of their students (Preisinger, 1988).

It is still the individual teacher who provides the impetus for computer use in ESL. While a few larger ESL programs might have a designated computer person (often more

a technician than a teacher), most programs still depend on individual teachers to carry out any CALL. This became apparent to me as I did my survey of local ESL programs. In four of the twelve schools I contacted, computer use had been halted because "that person" had left. It seems that a large ESL program starting in Japan had recruited CALL-oriented instructors in the area and thus deprived four schools of their computer-oriented teacher.

One university program has taken advantage of this individual preference for CALL by not institutionalizing CALL as a part of courses. Computer labs are available for classes to use during regular class time if the individual teacher wishes to use them. This voluntary non-prescriptive approach works because language teaching involves such a diversity of methods and materials that establishing specified software would interfere with a teacher's plans or ideas. Teachers decide if and how they might want to use the computer lab.

In addition, assistance is provided in creating new programs. In this way teachers can specify what they want to practice and how they want it to be practiced in the lab. The use of the computer is integrated into the course.

Most of the material produced is of the drill and practice variety for vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and specific usage. The computer can present a variety of information and exercises suited to the student's level and pace. Does this mean that the teachers have given up on

their communicative and meaningful practice? Have they gone to what Chomsky called "stultifying" repetition? Teachers say that this type of drill and practice is meaningful because it is specific to their classwork. It takes the place of classroom practice. Students like it because they find drill and practice familiar and comfortable. Another advantage is that the machine is nonjudgmental and they can practice without fear of making mistakes in public; the computer doesn't become exasperated if it has to repeat and repeat while, in contrast, a teacher may become tired of repetition before the student is satisfied. As teachers become more skilled in using authoring software, their programs will probably become more interactive and more flexible in the responses they accept. Instructional designers would recognize this approach as CALL being used as just one component in a larger instructional system that provides many ways to present the same lessons and thus accomodates the learning styles and needs of a diverse group of students. This combination of classroom activity supported by computer-assisted instruction has proved effective in other areas (Woodward, 1988).

In my survey of how computers are being used in ESL, it seems that CALL enthusiasts have established definite ideas of how computers can be useful and they have put many of these ideas into practice. However, there is little research on what consequences these uses of computers have had on student learning. Almost all the teachers I surveyed

agreed that student motivation was a primary factor in keeping CALL going, but that they had no proof that using CALL improved the performance. Wyatt (1988) points out that the rapid advances in technology reduce the relevance of what research that has been done. Other problems include the great number of variable elements in software development, variables in student characteristics, and changes in pedagogical approach. This is especially true of the holistic approach that many language teachers have taken; measurable effects are hard to find.

The entrance of computer technology into the teaching of English as a Second Language came at least twenty years ago, but it is still in its infancy. More realistic assessments of both the technology and its relationship to language learning are turning expensive equipment into useful tools. ESL professionals are evaluating CALL against other methods and media; certain CALL activities have taken their places in the reading and writing curriculum; commercial competition is raising the quality of software specifically made for ESL; technological advances in interactive video-disk and natural language programming are on the horizon; and, most importantly, teachers are becoming more sophisticated about CALL and creating their own materials.

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Note: These references are not included in an appendix. If you have difficulty locating them, you may call Roger Bourret, General Studies-ESL, South Seattle Community College, (206) 764-5363 for copies.